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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - NORTH KOREA
PARIS - FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

NORTH KOREA

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE FRONT-PAGE OF RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO ANNOUNCES SECRETARY OF STATE RICE'S ROUNDTABLE YESTERDAY IN LUXEMBOURG

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WITH SEVERAL EUROPEAN EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS AS "WASHINGTON'S TRANSATLANTIC CREDO." THE FULL TRANSCRIPT IS CARRIED ON PAGE THREE, WHERE THE INTERVIEW'S TITLE IS A QUOTE FROM SECRETARY RICE: "WITH EUROPE, WE CANNOT AGREE ON EVERYTHING."

ALTHOUGH FRENCH SOCIAL ISSUES AND THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION ARE MAJOR FRONT-PAGE STORIES, THE INTERNATIONAL PAGES FOCUS ON THE NEW THREAT FROM NORTH KOREA. LE FIGARO, LIBERATION AND LA CROIX DEVOTE EXTENSIVE ANALYSES TO THE REALITY OF NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR STATUS AND HOW PYONGYANG IS USING NUCLEAR THREAT AS A BARTERING TOOL (SEE PART C). IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION BRUNO TERTRAIS OF THE FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH CALLS NORTH KOREA'S ATTITUDE "THE SURVIVAL WEAPON OF A PARANOID REGIME."

A SEPARATE ARTICLE IN LE FIGARO ON NUCLEAR ISSUES RETRACES THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THE U.S. AND MOHAMMED EL-BARADEI OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY.

LE FIGARO'S REPORT ON THE NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS MEETINGS IN NICE IS ENTITLED: "NATO HARD-PRESSED TO MOBILIZE AROUND IRAQ." "WHILE REACHING A CONSENSUS OVER AFGHANISTAN WAS EASY, IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT WHEN IT COMES TO IRAQ. NEVERTHELESS THE NICE MEETING TOOK PLACE IN A MORE PEACEFUL TRANSATLANTIC ATMOSPHERE, AFTER THE HARSHNESS PROVOKED BY THE WAR IN IRAQ."

FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER MICHELE ALLIOT-MARIE IS QUOTED: "THAT EVERYBODY SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER IS FUNDAMENTAL, BUT THAT EVERYTHING SHOULD BE FORGOTTEN, NO. I DO NOT THINK WE MUST FORGET, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THESE PERIODS OF TENSION HAVE FOR A LONG TIME BEEN PART OF OUR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. OUR ABILITY TO OVERCOME THE DIFFERENCES WE HAVE AT TIMES IS WHAT MAKES OUR RELATIONSHIP STRONG."

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES AN OP-ED ENTITLED "BUSH-SHARON SUPERSTARS?" BY JEAN D'ORMESSON OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY. D'ORMESSON BELIEVES THE FRENCH "HAVE A TRADITION OF WRONGLY ASSESSING U.S. PRESIDENTS. THE WORLD MISS-READ PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE FRENCH WERE AT THE HEAD OF THE CLASS. IF PRESIDENT BUSH MANAGES TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING AKIN TO APPEASEMENT IN IRAQ AND BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS, HE WILL GO FROM BEING AN OUTCAST TO A GREAT MAN. EVERYTHING SEEMED LOST FOR SHARON AND BUSH. THEY ARE BACK IN THE FOREFRONT OF HISTORY."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

NORTH KOREA

"PYONGYANG'S ATOMIC THREAT"

ARNAUD DE LA GRANGE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (02/11): "THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE NORTH-KOREANS ARE AS DIRECT AND ON THE OFFENSIVE. THE TONE AND THE MOMENT PICKED FOR THIS ESCALATION HAS SURPRISED EVERYONE. THE MAIN QUESTION IS DECRYPTING WHAT THESE MASTERS OF BLACKMAIL HAVE IN MIND. ACCORDING TO THINK TANKER BRUNO TERTRAIS, IT IS EITHER A CONTINUATION OF THE NORTH KOREAN STRATEGY OF BLOWING HOT AND COLD, OR IT IS A STRATEGIC DECISION AFTER CONCLUDING THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE LEADING NOWHERE. THE WEST'S WORST NIGHTMARE IS SEEING NORTH KOREA BEGIN TO EXPORT NOT ONLY DANGEROUS EQUIPMENT BUT ALSO FISSILE MATERIAL TO DANGEROUS COUNTRIES. ARE THE NORTH KOREANS PARANOID OR VERY SKILFUL DIPLOMATS?"

"DEADLY CYCLE"

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (02/11): "A DANGEROUS SCENARIO SEEMS TO BE TAKING SHAPE IN EAST ASIA. THE AFFIRMATION MADE BY NORTH KOREA THAT IT IS AN ATOMIC REGIONAL

POWER COULD HAVE PROLIFERATION CONSEQUENCES: SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN, WHO ENJOY AMERICA'S PROTECTION, MAY BEGIN TO WANDER IF THIS IS ENOUGH. BOTH COULD CONSIDER THEY NEED TO ACQUIRE AN ATOMIC ARSENAL IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A BALANCE OF TERROR. ALL EYES ARE ON THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, WHICH IS AT ODDS WITH A SITUATION IT HAS NO CONTROL OVER."

"NORTH KOREA'S BLACKMAIL"

BERNARD GUETTA ON GOVERNMENT-RUN FRANCE INTER RADIO (02/11):
"THE PROBLEM OF NORTH KOREA IS SO REAL THAT NO GOVERNMENT CONTESTS THE SERIOUSNESS OF WHAT IS AT STAKE. THE ECONOMIC ISOLATION OF PYONGYANG IS SUCH A NIGHTMARE THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION IS TO NEGOTIATE. THE U.S. KNOWS THIS. BUT IT IS NOT EASY TO NEGOTIATE WITH A COUNTRY THAT WANTS EVERYTHING AND INTENDS TO GET IT. NORTH KOREA ALSO WANTS TO BE TREATED PROPERLY, TO BE LISTENED TO, AND TO BE TALKED ABOUT. THIS IS THE MESSAGE IT HAS JUST SENT. IT IS AN ANSWER TO PRESIDENT BUSH WHO INCLUDED NORTH KOREA IN THE LIST OF 'TYRANNIES.' NOW THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE IN A GAME OF RECIPROCAL DETERRENCE. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER NEGOTIATIONS WILL HAVE TO RESUME. BUT THERE IS AN ADDED DIFFICULTY: CHINA ALONE CAN HELP TO GLUE THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER. AND THE CHINESE WILL NOT DO IT FOR FREE: THEY HAVE THEIR PRICE." LEACH